



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2015

President Shelly lauds building renovations, tours facility



In Sept. 2014, President Shelly toured Administration Building No. 1 and pushed for its completion before his term ended. On Jan. 12, this goal was realized. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A crowd of tribal employees and officials gathered on a dreary Monday morning to celebrate the renovations of Administration Building No. 1. The cold weather did not deter them from participating in the celebration held in a white tent outside the building.

Thanks to Oakland-Arviso Construction Co., the renovated building is finally after 28 months of renovation activities.

Housed inside the

newly improved building are Division of General Services, Finance, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Personnel Management, and Design and Engineering Services.

President Shelly said the building's completion was the product of cooperation between the Executive and Legislative Branches of tribal government.

"Whoever is taking office next, I hope you took notes because this is how you get things done: by working

together, not against each other," President Shelly said.

He said Operation Breathe Safe began on Sept. 15, 2011 and closed the administration building due to black mold contamination. Employees were complaining of headaches and other medical issues.

Personal protective gear was required for employees to retrieve documents and equipment that needed to be decontaminated. The mold infestation was the result of non-maintenance.

"Water began to leak into the building and the walls," the president explained.

The mildew eventually resulted in a strong odor that gave employees headaches. Something had to be done. Closing the building meant employees had to find available workspace from other tribal divisions and departments.

"More than \$5 million was spent to remediate the building. Thank you Speaker Pro Tem Bates and Delegate Hale for securing the funding

that made these renovations possible,” President Shelly said.

Vice President Rex Lee Jim spoke next and provided his remarks entirely in Navajo.

He said the renovated building was like your own home; it is the center of learning and thinking for family and the Navajo people.

“Take good care of (the building). Be responsible for it. If you see trash, don’t just walk over it, pick it up and dispose of it,” Vice President Jim said. “Talk to each other and work with each other in a good way. Incorporate K’é into your office.”

He also encouraged employees to quickly process the requests from the public.

“You were all in crowded workspaces. You know what it’s like to be waiting. For this reason, quickly process your work for the people,” Vice President Jim said.

Chief of Staff Arbin Mitchell also gave words of thanks and encouragement.

“We worked very hard on this building. I would like to thank Design and Engineering Services. Also Facilities Maintenance and NOSHA,” Mitchell said. “Those are a few departments that assisted with making this happen.

“It took a lot of money, just like president said,” he added.

Funds were pooled together from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance and indirect cost monies. Carryover funds were also leveraged to cover the costs of construction.

“We’re working on Administration Building No. 2 right now. When you add these two buildings, it

probably runs close to \$10 million,” he said.

Jonathan Hale, chairman of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee, said Navajo elders would use this building renovation as a lesson to learn from.

“We’re at a time when our buildings are aging and in need of repairs. Our elders have always said to us, don’t you see the needs of your home? Are you going to fix it? I’m thankful for your work here,” Hale said.

He said employees had to endure cramped conditions for the past two years and that many complained about illness being spread and other issues.

“Thank you. Take care of it. When this building was first constructed, it wasn’t done right. Now it’s up to code and has blueprints for the work that was done. Take care of it in case something like this happens again 10 years from now,” Hale said.

Virgil Brown, director for the Division of General Services, took a lead role on the project and directed his crew from Facilities Maintenance to work with DES to complete the work.

“It was a team effort. That’s the only way that things get going fast. Administration Building No. 2 is being built right now and it will probably be finished a lot faster than this one,” Brown said.

He said it was a long journey that’s finally been completed.



President Shelly took a tour of the newly renovated administration building, led by Division of General Services director Virgil Brown. The group stops to take a look at the employee lounge for DGS staff. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Vice President Rex Lee Jim said the new building is like an individual’s home: it is the center for learning and teaching tribal employees and clients alike. He challenged employees to process work quickly. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



One of the biggest additions to the administration building was the spiral stairway on the eastside of the building, which included elevator access for the disabled. More than \$5.5 million was invested to repair the building from black mold infestation.. (Photo by Rick Abasta)